MAYORS STRONG AND GLEASON HEAR ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST GREATER NEW YORK.

ARGUED FOR A GREATER NEW YORK.

Mayors Strong and Gleason Heard the Addresses of Citizens.

Seth Low Made a Strong Plea in Favor of Consolidating the Cities.

Declared That Neither New York Nor Brooklyn Was a Complete City in Itself.

OPPONENTS OF UNION ALSO HEARD.

Afraid That the Municipalities Would Take a Leap in the Dark—The Question of Taxation Also a Bugbear.

Mayor Strong heard arguments on the Greater New York bill yesterday. Mayor Patrick J. Gleason, of Long Island City, heard them, too, and never showed the slightest signs of trepidation before the avalanche of figures, freed by some of the speakers. He seemed to enjoy it, while Colonel Strong seemed a bit perplexed and stroked his beard in a coaxing manner, as though it could help him in his perplexity.

The two Mayors heard repeated references to "a leap in the dark." In fact, this leap was quite the feature of the hearing that was held in the Aldermanic chamber. It was also developed that Mayor Strong is unquestionably a McKinley man. He himself was born in Ohio, and change of residence probably has not affected his pride in the State that produces office-holders. But he nevertheless blushed when one of the speakers made known his Presidential preference.

Those who came to oppose the bill were in the majority. The Union League was represented by a committee composed of Frederick C. Wagner, William E. Rogers, Cyrus Clark, Le Grand B. Cannon, George H. B. Hill, Charles Stewart Smith, John C. Coleman, D. B. St. John Roosa, Charles W. Watson, Frederick D. Tappen, Charles P. Emmons, Richard H. L. Townsend, Joseph Post and J. Collins Pumpelly.

Foremost among the men who support the measure were Andrew H. Green, Colonel George P. Webster, Mornay Williams, General George W. Wingate, James D. Lynch, Albert E. Renschel, Thomas J. Creamer, Lawson N. Fuller, Edwin P. Benedict, Edwin L. Bradford and George J. Greenfield. Mr. Green sat at the right hand of the Mayor and did not speak during the proceedings.

SETH LOW FOR CONSOLIDATION.

Seth Low was the first speaker. "As one who is a native of Brooklyn and who also is now identified hardly less closely with the city of New York," said he, beginning, "it is natural that I should feel a warm and lively interest in the proposed consolidation of the two cities as a part of the Greater New York." Continuing he said:

I believe in the consolidation of the cities, first, because they are essentially one community; second, because I believe that, on the whole, they will be better governed as a single community than they have been as three; third, because I believe that the people who live in the three cities, and for the sake of whom all three of the city governments exist, will be greatly benefited in many particulars by attacking the problems of their common life with united strength rather than as independent cities, and therefore to some extent inevitably with divided power.

I presume that few will dispute the proposition that the three cities affected by this bill are, in effect, a single community.

It has been said that none of the three cities has succeeded so well with the problem of city government as to encourage the belief that the municipal problem can be dealt with better, even if as well as hitherto, should the three cities be united into one. This argument does not seem to me to be conclusive.

EXPECTS BETTER GOVERNMENT.

He said that if a similar argument had prevailed during the critical period after the close of the Revolutionary War the Government of the United States never would have been formed. He continued:

There is, I think, good reason to hope, in connection with the proposed union of the three cities, that a basis of better government may be found than any of the cities have hitherto enjoyed. As bearing upon this point, I ask you to notice that every one of the three cities, as they now exist, is in a certain sense an abnormal community. The cities of Brooklyn and Long Island City are composed almost entirely of what one may call the middle cut of the population. They have in them a few wealthy men, but comparatively few. On the other hand, while they have some poor, they have, by comparison with New York, few of the very poor. New York, in the meanwhile, to a remarkable extent, precisely because it loses to Brooklyn and Long Island City and to other places this middle cut, has a population of extremes—the very rich and the very poor.

The result of this distribution of population is to widen in New York the gap between the rich and the poor; to make the transition from wealth to poverty more abrupt, and tends thus to divide man from man, not only by a wider, but also by a deeper gap. So that New York by itself is not a normal community. It largely lacks the elements of population that bind the extremes together. In the meanwhile the wealth of New York is created to no small extent by inhabitants of Brooklyn and of Long Island City, but these people contribute nothing to good government in New York, because they do not [illegible]

On the other hand, in Brooklyn and in Long Island City, where they do exercise the franchise, such people have only a divided interest. Their material interests are frequently greater in New York than in the city of their homes. Brooklyn and Long Island City, therefore, for the purposes of good city government, do not get the full advantage of their own population. Thus these cities also are striving for good government under abnormal conditions.

Mr. Low declared that the whole strength of this city is thrown into an effort to distribute its population to the north rather than to the east, and the result was crowding unequalled in any other city of the world. He added:

If the cities are consolidated into one, it ought to go without saying that the united strength of the Greater New York will, in time, bridge and tunnel the intervening river until the population can settle to the eastward as readily as to the northward.

UNION LEAGUE MAN SPEAKS.

William E. Rogers, of the Union League, said he represented the business and the public activity of the city, and so appeared as the representative of many millions of dollars. He detailed the history of the movement. When the question was put to a vote it was said all that was wanted was an expression of opinion from the people as to the desirability of consolidation. The people gave it, and now we have an imperious mandate from the Legislature. The most that can be claimed is some practical method of consolidation, which, the speaker declared, the bill under discussion was not.

At this juncture Mayor Gleason entered the room and took a seat beside Mayor Strong, in time to hear Mr. Rogers speak on the equality of assessment. If this should be brought about, said the speaker, it is evident that New York's taxes would go up and Brooklyn's down. This, he thought, was the secret of activity among certain persons in the City of Churches. He said it would raise this city's taxes $8,000,000 a year, based on the figures of 1895. Addition of vast districts would, of course, increase the expenditure probably about $12,000,000, and he went on to show how the total would in all probability reach $425,000,000. Increased taxation means increased rents, and Mr. Rogers showed how it would add to the burden of the workingman.

"In case this bill becomes a law," said Mr. Rogers, in conclusion, "we will be confronted with political chaos. You, Mr. Mayor, are the only citizen of this State that stands between us and it. I hope you will find it consistent with your duties to oppose the bill."

FEARS A "LEAP IN THE DARK."

James C. Carter said he appeared as a member of the City Club, and as a private individual. It was he who first advised against a [illegible] upon the Consolidation bill with undisguised suspicion.

"New York and Brooklyn are separate municipalities working out their own destinies," he said, in substance. "They have encountered difficulties, have been confronted with the greatest mischief and disorders all the time. To remedy this the citizens have devoted themselves with all teh energy they possessed. The bill provides for a combination of these municipalities. I can not say whether this is wise or not. I don't believe there are ten men who can do so.

"It may tend to our advantage. On the other hand, it may plunge us into difficulties and miseries we never thought of. It is a leap in the dark. No one knows with the degree of certainty he should know. What we want is knowledge on the subject. Before we take the final step which may precipitate us into unknown and insuperable difficulties, we want knowledge.

"To take this leap in the dark is most inexpedient. There is no necessity for rushing the measure along. Why this haste? We can wait ten years more. We should examine into this matter, length and breadth. We need a thorough inquiry. The first work should have been the appointment of a committee to draw up a charter. That would have soon shown the difficulties.

"This is a step in the dark contrary to every dictate of wisdom, contrary to every principle a man would observe in the conduct of his private affairs. It is a piece of legislation that has no parallel anywhere. Why are we shut off from information? I am not a suspicious man, but I think that those behind the measure fear to have it investigated."

Alfred R. Conkling, Charles W. Watson and Benjamin F. Romaine were the next speakers against the bill.

Augustus A. Levy exhibited a book entitled "How Taxes in Brooklyn Can Be Reduced One-half."

"That is because the other half could be borne by New York," explained Mr. Levy. And he argued along on this line. He said the thing could not be done without inflicting a disastrous outrage on the people of this city.

In answer to a question from Mr. Conkling, the Mayor decided that residents from Brooklyn could not be heard, as Brooklynites had an opportunity to speak in their own city. But the Mayor neglected to ascertain the residence of W. P. Stemsby before that gentleman began to speak.

BROOKLYNITE HAS HIS SAY.

"Is New York to be the metropolis of this county?" asked Mr. Slemsby, glaring at the Mayor. "Are you going to let the giant of the West outstrip you in the race for supremacy? We want to hold the supremacy of New York and the Western continent. We must be the greatest! Even if we have to annex everything within twenty miles of New York, including Patrick J. Gleason, whom I see there and whom I consider one the country's greatest men."

Long Island City's big Mayor blushed, and Mr. Slemsby continued: "I don't think we people of Brooklyn" ——

Then Mayor Strong disqualified him, and Mr. Stemsby stepped down, saying: "It's a good thing I got in as much as I did."

Robert Winstone believes in the bill. Erastus Wiman believed that Staten Island would supply all that New York lacked to make a perfect harbor—receipt, storage and shipment. This secured, the city's declining commerce would be revived. "In God's providence," said he, "no city ever had such an offer as Staten Island has made to New York as a place for manufacture."

Then he spoke of protection and said: "We are on the eve of a Presidential election. I think, Mr. Mayor, and I know you think rightly, that a son of Ohio will occupy the highest position."

There was applause and the Mayor tugged nervously at his beard.

BITTER AGAINST UNION.

Brooklynites Use Their Strongest Arguments to Induce the Mayor to Oppose Consolidation.

Sentiments were expessed boldly and some of the language used approached bitterness at the hearing on consolidation before Mayor Wurster, of Brooklyn, yesterday. The afternoon was given over to those opposing annexation, and among the twenty-four speakers who appeared before the Mayor were some of the best orators of the city, men of the learned professions, and longshoremen, bankers and merchants, and representatives of labor and every kind of business.

MR. WOODHOUSE'S ARGUMENTS.

The first speaker, S. L. Woodhouse, said he was at the hearing as a consolidationist who was opposed to any measure which had not been first submitted to the people of Brooklyn. He devoted a few sentences to telling what a great city Brooklyn is, and then, advancing toward the Mayor, he pounded the desk with his fist and exclaimed:

"Enforced consolidation is tyranny; in Europe it would bring revolution! I oppose in particular the consolidation measure because it invites disaster to Brooklyn by empowering political gamesters to rule us by commission. This would bind Brooklyn hand and foot, stride her voice and menace her liberties. What a field for plunder, what a harvest of corruption and political patronage! It was conceived in sin. The very suggestion of nine months in which to frame a charter for the Greater New York when it has taken twenty years to construct one for the Greater London proves one of five things: ignorance, indolence, indifference, imbecility or evil intent.

"Build the Greater New York upon a political image and you insure its early doom; yoke Brooklyn unconditionally to Tammany Hall and you at least invite disaster.

GREATNESS OF BROOKLYN.

"In moral, educational, practical, social and governmental matters Brooklyn leads every great city in the land, while in financial strength New York is our joy and pride. Partnership of these two great cities upon solid foundation would, I believe, bring blessings to both; partnership upon any other foundation would be their everlasting curse.

"It is poor politics," he declared, "for bosses and children to play with a buzz saw."

"That's for Platt," said a man in the audience. And the Mayor smiled, stroked his chin whiskers and pulled another lead pencil from his pocket to chew.

AN OLD CITIZEN SPEAKS.

Mr. Redfield, who introduced all the speakers for the League of Loyal Citizens, then brought forward Bryan H. Smith, president of the Brooklyn Savings Bank, who explained his right to speak on the measure by saying he had lived on one plot of ground in the city for sixty years, and that his father had lived at the same place before him. His father was the first Mayor of the city elected by popular vote.

"That may be called a sentimental ground for opposing consolidation," he said, "but it amounts to a great deal with an old resident.

OPPOSED THE BILL.

"If the measure is carried through," he said, "it means that Brooklyn will be left out in the cold. We would have about one-third of the vote and New York two-thirds. As a result, we would get only a few of the bones and the crumbs from the metropolitan table. The people cannot be deluded by the idea that Thomas C. Platt and Mr. Lexow, who never lived here, nor never had any interests here, can come down here and try to force upon us, willing or unwilling, such a measure, because they know better what is for our good."

When Dr. T. L. Cuyler was called for he was greeted with a round of applause, and then with laughter, when he remarked that he would sooner appear before the Mayor of the city than gural legislators, who treat arguments flippantly and act as if the granting of a hearing were a great favor. Dr. Cuyler grew very emphatic as he progressed. He unbuttoned his clerical coat and went at the subject as if he were preaching a forcible sermon to a big congregation in his own church.

"This whole enormous piece of legislation," he said, "is based on the fact that about 300 spiteful Coney Islanders, a couple of years ago, gave their votes as they did, thus making an aggregate of the city vote in favor of consolidation. It would be about as sensible to build a city hall on a clamshell as to consider that vote representative. A better indication of the people's feelings is found in the petition by 98,000 of the unbought citizens of Brooklyn, which an insolvent Legislature threw out of the window.

VIOLATION OF CITY RIGHTS.

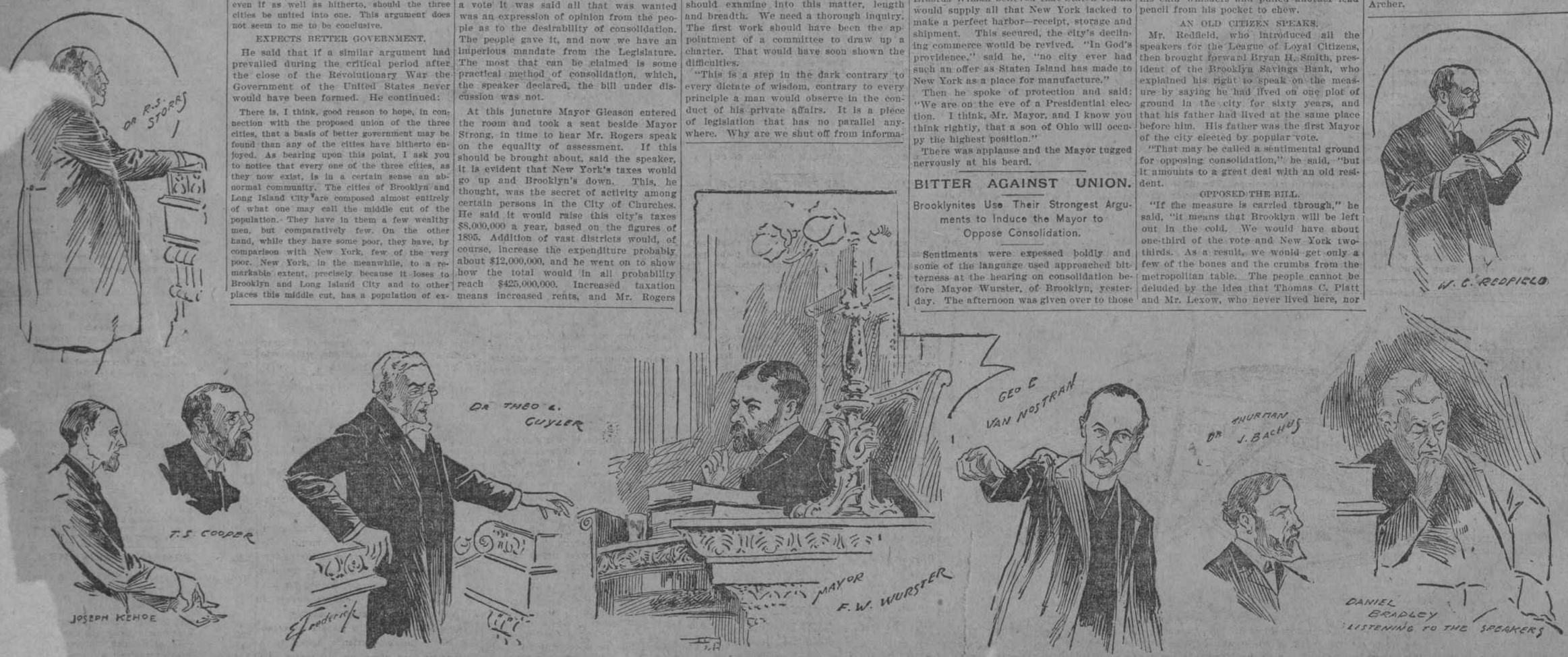
"I know of nothing in the whole history of America that can compare with this violation of city rights. We have got an admirable charter, an admirable city government and an admirable Mayor, while at the other end of the Bridge is an enormous mass of humanity, packed into tenement houses, the tools of Tammany, that we propose to allow to rule us by simple brute force."

Dr. Cuyler said he could not believe that one elected by the people of Brooklyn could be a party to the scheme to throw the city at the feet of Tammany Hall and the powers of darkness. He gave it as his opinion that the thoughtful people of New York do not favor the bill drafted by Lexow, and that they are not to be bribed by the sentimental idea of being bigger than Chicago.

DR. STORRS GIVES HIS VIEWS.

Rev. Dr. Storrs spoke with great deliberation, in striking contrast to the animation of Dr. Cuyler.

Other speakers were Oliver P. Miller, cashier of the Williamsburg Savings Bank; Dr. Truman J. Backus, president of the Packer Institute, who said that Brooklyn's schools are better than those of New York; William N. Dykman, Silas M. Giddings, who said that if Mayor Wurster vetoed the Lexow bill his name would stand with that of Washington as a patriot; John S. McKeon, T. S. Cooper, William Hemstreet, A. A. Low, Dr. George G. Hopkins, Joseph F. Kohler, Nathaniel Elliot, George V. Van Nostrand, Thomas H. Gray and George E. Archer.



LEADING BROOKLYNITES ARGUE AGAINST CONSOLIDATION BEFORE MAYOR WURSTER.